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Idaho Transportation Department

Today's News Briefs

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Proposed bill would help fund state highway projects

BOISE - Legislators looked at a potential bill Monday that, if passed, could help complete the State Highway 16 project — an effort to improve access from Emmett to Interstate 84.

That 22-mile stretch of highway is referred to the Central Valley Expressway. Part of the expressway has already been completed from SH-44 to I-84 and construction on a Boise River bridge between State Street and West Chinden Boulevard will likely start this year.

But that still leaves gaps in the CVE north and south of those areas — making transportation an obstacle and potentially discouraging companies from developing along that corridor, Elwood Kleaver, former Boise Valley Economic Partnership chairman said.

“There really is no easy way ... for them to easily get to the freeway, so it really limits their ability to grow,” he said.

It'll cost another \$560 million to finish the CVE, according to data from the Central Valley Expressway Coalition, a group formed in 2010 to support Highway 16's completion.

The coalition is lobbying for new legislation called the Transportation and Economic Development Zone (TEDZ). It would be used to help fund state highway projects worth \$100 million or more.

Here's how it would work: The Department of Commerce and Idaho Transportation Department would arrange an independent economic study on a portion of state highway.

The study would determine what direct economic benefits — such as job creation and increased sales tax revenues — the highway project would bring to Idaho.